

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY APRIL 19, 2010

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY APRIL 6, 2010

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2009–10 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 2143

Introduced by Assembly Member Gilmore
(Principal coauthor: Assembly Member Cook)

February 18, 2010

An act to add Section 64.5 to the Military and Veterans Code, relating to military and veterans.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2143, as amended, Gilmore. The Department of Veterans Affairs: consolidation of services to veterans.

Existing law establishes the Department of ~~Veteran's~~ *Veterans Affairs* within state government and sets forth its powers and duties, including, but not limited to, administration of veterans benefits programs. Existing law establishes the California Veterans Board within the department and sets forth its powers and duties, including, but not limited to its power to determine operational policy for the department.

This bill would establish the California Veterans Services and Workforce Development Division within the Department of Veterans Affairs for the purpose of coordinating and administering veterans assistance programs in the state, and would require the division to perform various functions and duties relating to the coordination and administration of veterans assistance programs, as specified.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. The Legislature hereby finds and declares the following:

(a) California has the largest veteran population in the nation, comprised of an estimated 2 million veterans. Each month, thousands of military personnel are released from active service, and face tremendous challenges transitioning back into civilian life.

(b) The challenges military veterans face are compounded by a complex system of veteran assistance programs that is difficult to navigate.

(c) The United States Department of Veterans Affairs expended approximately \$6 billion in California in the 2005 federal fiscal year. Of that amount, \$2.66 billion was in disability payments (compensation and benefits) to veterans. The states that have the largest veteran populations in the nation are California, Florida, and Texas. Texas veterans have collected 44 percent more disability benefits than the amount collected by California veterans.

(d) Increasing disability benefit participation in California in an amount that would approach the national average could generate an additional \$330 million in annual payments to California veterans.

SEC. 2. Section 64.5 is added to the Military and Veterans Code, to read:

64.5. (a) The California Veterans Services and Workforce Development Division is hereby established within the department for the purpose of coordinating and administering veterans assistance programs in the state. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall have authority over the division.

(b) The division shall do all of the following:

(1) Coordinate with other state agencies that provide benefits and assistance to veterans to ensure that information about veterans assistance programs and benefits is made available to all state agencies that serve veterans in the state.

(2) Administer the Transitional Assistance Program (TAP) and the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP), *as prescribed under the Jobs for Veterans State Grants program*, in cooperation with the Employment Development Department. The division shall work with staff from the Employment Development Department

1 to develop a plan whereby responsibility for the administration of
2 TAP and DVOP shall be transferred from the Employment
3 Development Department to the division.

4 (3) Ensure that other state agencies and officials that are
5 involved in the implementation and administration of veterans
6 services programs are informed when any changes in existing
7 programs are required, or new programs are established that
8 provide assistance and benefits to veterans, and require that those
9 agencies and officials report to the division when those changes
10 occur or new programs are established.

11 (4) Collaborate with staff from other state agencies including,
12 but not limited to, the Labor and Workforce Development Agency,
13 the Employment Training Panel, the California Workforce
14 Investment Board, the State Department of Mental Health, the
15 Department of General Services, the State Department of Alcohol
16 and Drug Programs, and representatives of the University of
17 California, the California State University, and the California
18 Community Colleges with regard to the provision of veterans
19 services and benefits.